

THE SOUL THAT LIES BEHIND THE WAITER'S MASK

He Is Stolid as the Sphinx as He Takes Your Order, but His Other Self Is Often a Story

And That Alter Ego May Be a Capitalist, an Artist, a Military Hero or Anything

WHEN the suave, smooth-faced person on whom you wait as your best evening entertainment becomes a glib of servitude whisk back a chair, waves you into it, frisks a bit of fare before you and stands back with ears inclined regard him with more attention than you usually bestow.

At the moment his whole being seems in attendance upon you. His ears are strained for the first rumble that betokens an order about to issue from your lips. Perhaps in his zeal he makes a suggestion.

"A cocktail, Monsieur?" he says, and his very soul, you would think, hangs upon your reply.

"No?" His face falls, and you may not see him smile again—unless you call for the wine card.

As you make your laborious suggestions he painstakingly writes them down, then hands over the slip to the man who is really going to wait upon you and passes on with something like a sigh.

While he is hovering above the next table steal another look at him. A long acquaintance with waiters may have driven you to the conclusion that he is a race of soulless creatures. Yet he may really have a soul.

"Yes," you reply, "a soul with but a single thought—how he can get more money out of me than I want to part with."

Again you are wrong—or may be. His life may be a life filled to the brim with romance. Under that unruffled shirt from a heart may pulse with experience of adventure such as never occurred in your twice a year journeying between city and country. He may have met face to face the great ones of the world; and you, if you chance to be a woman, would give your soul to have achieved some of the things that to him have been only a part of the day's work. For it is not unlikely that he has passed the time of day with a grand duke or even an emperor, and even poured tea—or coffee—at an imperial elbow.

Back of that mental mask, under that dome of discreet silence, may hide a temple of art or science. The trochees and hexameters of a poet may be marshaling in obedience to a muse lurking behind those shaggy eyebrows. Not a "village Hampden" he, perhaps, but he may be a Morgan of the dinner table, and you who grudgingly hand him a quarter for designing to serve you he may be able to buy or sell ten times.

It has been the writer's fortune to know in many parts of the world many waiters and to have encountered the same waiter in many parts of the world, for some of the profession are migratory to a superlative degree, and they flock to that particular place which is just enjoying its "season."

There was that little waiter who years ago was an "omnibus" in the Carlton grill room. Later he was encountered as head waiter in the sea-going restaurant on the America. After a few years he was discovered in charge of the Ritz-Carlton restaurant in New York. Another who worked in the main restaurant of the Carlton at the same time succeeded his confrere on the America and later was transformed into the head waiter of the Knickerbocker.

This story is mainly inspired by news that has just come from Paris concerning Jules. A year and a half ago Jules was perhaps one of the most noted figures in the Tenderloin. As head waiter of that gloomy gilded eating house in Broadway just below Forty-second street which after various aliases (termed with its famous Babylonian picture to its end under the name of the "Cafe de Paris") Jules became widely known among those who dine luxuriously and wine expensively. When the Castles opened the Sans Souci Jules became the manager of that establishment, and during the season that piled up profits at a rate which was responsible for the change in the character of many an eating house in New York Jules made a fortune as his share.

Some twelve years ago Jules was a reception clerk in the Carlton hotel, in London. In that day he wore a little fringe of chin whiskers and was called M. Ansaldi. One day M. Ansaldi appealed to an American for advice. He had had an offer to come to the United States and a chance at a berth in the Hotel Walton in Philadelphia. He was advised to take it up. He did. But life in Philadelphia did not long appeal to him. He found soon that in this country the big profits in the hotel business do not come to clerks. He studied the situation. He shaved his beard and became a waiter and in time was commanding a restaurant.

When the war broke out Jules was one of the first to take ship for France. Several times reports came back that he was dead. The first man from hereabout who has seen Jules since the day he departed from New York got back the other day. He is an engineer who is widely known in the night life of New York. He was in the Cafe de Paris for luncheon one day recently, one of a few men in civilian clothes in the restaurant. Most of the other men wore the new blue of the French army uniform or the British khaki. His attention was attracted by one of a party of French officers at the next table who kept turning and looking at him.

Finally the officer got up and came over. "Why, don't you know me, Mr. Blank?" he said. "I am Jules, Jules of the old Cafe de Paris in New York."

It was Jules, but so changed that he was hardly recognizable. He had broadened out and bronzed. He wore the insignia of a lieutenant of cavalry. On his breast was the "Croix de Guerre," the new French military medal. He said he was taking the first leave of absence since the war began.

When the war came Jules was too old to be called out, so he volunteered as a private in his old cavalry regiment. Jules told the American. "I have seen service all along the line, part of the time in the trenches. You are the first person I have seen from New York since the day I arrived in Paris."

The New Yorker inquired if Jules had won his war medal, but Jules blushed and would not tell. The other

gathered that it was for reconnaissance service performed behind the German lines.

The story is almost forgotten of the waiter who came to be the proprietor of one of the most fashionable restaurants in New York and the owner of a big racing stable in Paris. Ten years ago there was much talk of the head waiter who made a fortune out of the tips of Western market plungers, only to have them take most of it away from him. The waiter still lives and is again prosperous, but his story is seldom recounted.

It is said that when so many clubs began to flock to Forty-fourth street most of the desirable sites in the block between Fifth and Sixth avenues were found to be in the hands of a man who had been a waiter in Delmonico's, but who had had the foresight to anticipate what was coming and quietly secure options on every available piece of property in that part of the thoroughfare.

There is one head waiter in New York who confesses that he says to himself the first thing when he awakens every morning, "Well, another \$30 without working for it," referring to the accumulating interest on his stocks and bonds. In all, he has a fortune of \$300,000, part of which is invested in gilt edged real estate. A \$30 tip is not an infrequent incident with him. He once got a tip on a certain copper stock from a grateful patron and cleared \$23,000 on it.

One day he was seen to go up to



"I am Jules, Jules of the old Cafe de Paris in New York."



He proceeded to clip coupons.

the desk of the hotel where he is employed and get from the clerk a strong box that had been in the safe. He opened the receptacle and took out a handful of bonds, from which he proceeded to clip coupons.

"How much do you cut off?" he was asked.

"Oh, only \$300," was the reply. "This is a bad month for dividends. You wait until next month."

So much for financiers. There are some waiters who have other interests than the mere making of money.

One man, who used to be a waiter in one of the fashionable restaurants, has a passion for painting. All his spare time is given to his art, and his summer vacations he spends in the mountains, going about with his brush and canvas. He has a studio near the big hotel where he is the manager of the restaurant service, and he pays a model by the day, so that when he has a few minutes to spare he drops down the street and works away with his brush, while his mind is busy inventing some new way of serving a dish.

And there are those who turn to music to solace them in their hours of leisure. A teacher of the "voice" not long ago became tremendously interested in a young gentleman who came to take lessons from her. His card bore the title of "von" before his family name, indicating that he was a person of noble birth or of that rank in his native country. He gave as his address one of the fashionable hotels. He was handsome and carried himself with an air of distinction. The marked attention he paid his instructor was not without effect upon a heart that had beaten susceptible for more than thirty years.

There came a time when he did not report for his usual lesson. After a few days a letter arrived telling that he was ill. The solicitous teacher, armed with a bouquet of expensive roses, presented herself at the hotel and inquired after "Mr. von—"

The clerk looked carefully over the room card and then over the books. No such person was registered.

"But he gave this as his address," insisted the lady, "and he has often received letters that I have addressed here."

The clerk was struck by a sudden recollection. He had heard that name somewhere, but without the "von" attached.

He took up the telephone.

"Give me the head waiter," he said. The head waiter looked puzzled. What had the head waiter to do with the aristocratic Mr. von—?

"Madam," said the clerk, after an interval, "the head waiter tells me that a man of that name has been

of the one step, the hesitation and the tango. They passed the rest of the afternoon in dancing.

As 6 o'clock approached the lady expressed her regret that the hour was late, as the time had passed so pleasantly; but she had a dinner engagement and must really be going.

Her cavalier drew out his watch.

"Really," he exclaimed, "I had no idea it was so late! I too have a dinner engagement."

They parted with many expressions of regret. At dinner the woman happened to glance at the face of the waiter who was serving her the hors d'oeuvres. She started in amazement. He was her dancing partner of the afternoon!

One who was making a study of the present status of the dance craze dropped into a brand new restaurant for dinner. At the next table sat a smooth faced, dark haired man who was being fairly showered with attentions. Half a dozen waiters had preceded him to his seat, where three busied themselves in looking after his chair, straightening out the table cover and taking his order.

The features of this enviable diner seemed familiar, but in a sitting posture the newcomer could not place him. He wore a dress shirt, but he did not seem to know what to do with his hands. He took up the bill of fare nervously and put it down hurriedly. Every once in a while he would nod at a waiter, who would bow and smile in evident delight over the recognition.

His identity proved so much of a puzzle and his discomfort and awkwardness were such as he slipped his champagne, that the investigator called his own attendant and asked who was the gentleman at the next table.

"That, sir," was the reply given in a reverential whisper, "is the head waiter at Soandso's—naming another restaurant."

That prolific pair of entertaining novelists whose hero among other accomplishments is invariably and inevitably an expert automobilist did not stretch truth when they made a noble spendthrift in one of their romances serve a term as waiter in a New York restaurant. Every once in a while a case of this kind comes to light.

During the big strike of the waiters two years ago, when many hotels had to employ to serve their patrons anybody that would express a willingness to handle dishes and take risks of being beaten up after he got out of the building at night, a man applied at a Broadway restaurant for a job who admitted that he had never had any experience as a waiter but thought he might be able to learn. Anyhow, he added, he needed work.

One day he dropped something in confidence to one of his fellows, and the latter quickly reported to the head waiter that the very green hand was an Italian marquis. The head waiter immediately sought the awkward servant and demanded the truth. After much hesitation the man admitted that he was really a "mar-chese," and produced papers which supported his story. His name is in the Almanach de Gotha.

Not many who are in the habit of dining out are aware that the hand-



He was serving the hors d'oeuvres.



"A cocktail, Monsieur?"

ness should be certain of getting just the dishes in a strange capital or watering place that were warranted to titillate a royal palate.

When off duty, Maxim liked to go about and entertain in the princely fashion his patrons were wont to act, and as his earnings and the gratuities that came his way were large, he was able to indulge this taste every once in a while.

It is related of Maxim that one night he entered a gay restaurant in Berlin and made it impossible for anybody to purchase anything in the place except himself. Champagne flowed at his expense, and naturally all the femininity in the place gravitated or levitated in his direction.

Chance sent to the same restaurant a Russian Grand Duke, who was making the sociological tour of the capital that used to be so popular among Grand Dukes when they got away from their own St. Petersburg. The Imperial Highness halted in the entry.

"Wait a moment," he said to his aide-de-camp. He listened for a moment to the sounds of revelry that came out. "Let me first take a look inside," and he pecked in through a crack.

"Huh!" he is said to have remarked to his aide-de-camp, "no use of our going in here. Maxim is in there and he owns the place."

Maxim now plies his trade in a fashionable New York restaurant. He was asked the other day to tell his story. He smiled.

"If there were a couple of hundred thousand dollars in it I might," he said. "Otherwise, what is the use? I have lived and have enjoyed life.

Again, I want to live. There is one thing to do, and that is to get money. Then there is only one thing left—to spend it."

Eight or ten years ago there was a waiter at the Savoy Hotel in London whose manners were perfect. A few years later the same waiter—his was an Italian—turned up in the Ritz-Carlton restaurant on the Kaiser's Auguste Victoria. Then he disappeared, and the information was that he had gone back to Europe to stay. Fully two years later, going into the Hotel Astor for luncheon, the writer was astonished to behold the same waiter gliding about with a napkin on his arm. Asked where he had been during the interval, he replied:

"On an exploring expedition. I have come over here to try to get together enough money to enable me to continue my work. Exploring costs a lot of money, and waiting is the only thing I can do that brings me in money. Since I saw you I have been making a little trip into northern Africa, and I have made a report to the Royal Geographical Society and have received a medal from it."

"While I got a good education in Italy," he went on, "I could not get work of a kind there that I could do. That is what started me off to France, and thence to London to work as a waiter. But I was always passionately fond of geography and of tales of adventure and in my leisure time I read books and studied the use of the instruments explorers use."

While in London I got a chance to meet a famous explorer who took me on an expedition with him. After that for years I saved up money until I was able to outfit my own little expedition and start on the trip I had long planned."

"When I got back from this all my funds were exhausted. I could have got a job in London, but somehow I did not relish the idea of being a waiter in a country whose highest scientific society had honored me with its medal. Therefore I thought I would slip over here and try to get enough money together to go off on another tour, or else take a job as waiter and look about in the meanwhile for something of a more dignified nature to turn up."

Several months later I received a call from the waiter. He was apparently very happy.

"My chance has come at last," he said. "I leave for Buenos Ayres tomorrow. Not long ago I was recognized at the hotel by a wealthy American I used to know. He drew from me my story, and naturally I made mention of the fact that I was anxious to do something to do."

"He looked at me for a little time in silence."

"What languages do you speak?" he asked. I mentioned that besides my native Italian, I could converse fluently in Spanish, French and English.

"Good! You may be just the man I want," he cried. "Come down to my office tomorrow."

"I called the next day, and found that he wanted a man to go down to the branch of his business he was starting in Buenos Ayres, and where he was sending as manager another who could speak only English. He offered to send me along as second in the office. Naturally, I jumped at the offer."

"During the last few weeks I have been learning something about the business and the things they are shipping to South Africa, and tomorrow I leave on the Lamport & Holt liner with a good salary and a man's opportunity."

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